

**LENINIST
THEORY
OF
REVOLUTION
AND
SOCIAL
PSYCHOLOGY**

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PORSHNEV

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Of late Soviet scholars have shown decided interest in social psychology. The development of communist relationships, the moulding of the new man, the varied forms of social struggle in capitalist countries and young national states arouse extensive interest in social psychology as a science and call for more research in this field.

Lenin's works inspire historians to delve deeper into the dynamics of public sentiments to ascertain the psychological basis of social phenomena, and to consider facts in relation to their social and psychological significance.

The author of the book Boris Porshnev is an eminent Soviet scholar who has published many distinguished works in history anthropology ethnography and psychology He is also known for his popular rendition of scientific topics

1 A REALISTIC ATTITUDE

Marxism is a science studying the laws and conditions determining the processes of social life. It combines abstract theoretical thought and profoundly concrete knowledge. Besides, Marxism calls for imaginativeness and dedication. We should dream! I wrote these words and became alarmed. Lenin humorously remarked in his "What Is to Be Done?"

He imagined himself being sternly asked by a Social Democrat: "Has a Marxist any right at all to dream, knowing that according to Marx mankind always sets itself the tasks it can solve and that tactics is a process of the growth of Party tasks which grow together with the Party?"

The very thought of these stern questions Lenin wrote makes me wish for nothing but a place to hide in. And he tried to hide behind Pisarev's words concerning the naturalness and the necessity of a certain rift between reality and the dream that ran ahead of this reality. Otherwise Pisarev claimed it would

be impossible to imagine "what stimulus there would be to induce man to undertake and complete extensive and strenuous work in the sphere of art, science, and practical endeavour... The rift between dreams and reality causes no harm if only the person dreaming believes seriously in his dream, if he attentively observes life, compares his observations with his castles in the air, and if, generally speaking, he works conscientiously for the achievement of his fantasies. If there is some connection between dreams and life then all is well." And Lenin concludes in all seriousness: "Of this kind of dreaming there is unfortunately too little in our movement."¹

During past millennia man has dreamed and some of his dreams have come true enabling him to find a way to reality no matter how complex it may be.

The sculptor or architect scrutinises and ponders over the natural properties and secrets of a rock in order to give it clear-cut and meaningful outlines, seeing a way for his dream to materialise. But when it comes to radically changing social life and mentality the task is far more involved. It is a process that entails a thorough scrutiny ranging from a whole complex of the most abstract economic laws and concrete phenomena, down to intricate mechanics of human sentiments.

Lenin was not a psychologist. But one of his earlier works, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight Against the Social-Democrats", contains Lenin's lively and astute reaction to Sechenov's works which marked a

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 509-510.

turning point in psychology as a science Lenin noted the scientist's absolutely new understanding of psychology—the result of Sechenov's successful analysis of formerly unexplained psychological phenomena Lenin highly appreciated the foremost materialistic trends in Russia's research in psychology But Lenin himself had a different approach to psychology His interest in the subject stemmed from the need for a clear and comprehensive understanding of people's inner motives and sentiments That was necessary for the cause of the proletarian revolution the cause of the Party A study of mass psychology was essential for estimating at any given time the relative strength of the revolutionary forces Lenin's works contain a wealth of sober and at the same time stirring observations with regard to sentiments psychological shifts and conditions of different strata of society at different moments of history

Legal Marxists and Menshevik Social Democrats often spoke of the need for taking into account the psychology of different classes and social groups But they were mainly attracted by those aspects of social psychology which according to them indicated that the people were not socially and psychologically prepared for an immediate revolutionary upheaval Their theoretical approach in fact, made them oblivious of everything else around them Noteworthy in this respect is Lenin's polemics with P Struve the Russian bourgeois philosopher and economist, concerning the presence of such socio-psychical conditions ¹ for the revolution

¹ *Lenin, Coll Works* Vol 3 p 350

Struve was opposed to the slogan of insurrection inasmuch as mass scale propaganda of a democratic programme alone as he claimed could create the necessary socio-psychological conditions. Lenin explained that to make such pronouncements at the time when the revolution had already begun meant moving backwards to suit the liberal bourgeoisie. Just as in the Frankfurt Parliament of 1848 the bourgeois wind bags were busy drawing up resolutions, declarations and decisions engaging in mass propaganda and preparing the socio-psychological conditions when it was a matter of repelling the government's armed forces when the movement had led to the necessity of an armed struggle.¹ Lenin wrote Peshekhonov a Socialist Revolutionary with Menshevik leanings demanded that the slogan of replacing the monarchy by the republic *must be deleted* from the platform. We must reckon with the psychological factor. The monarchist idea is too deeply rooted in the popular mind. This psychology of the broad masses must be reckoned with. The question of the republic calls for extreme caution. Lenin caustically criticised this kind of psychologism. Instead of mercilessly combating monarchist prejudices he writes Peshekhonov justifies the knout on the grounds that it has a thousand years of history behind it and deduces that the knout must be treated with extreme caution. We must not pander to the proprietary or *owning* instincts of this class. Lenin went on to say but on the con-

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 9 p 69

trary *at once* begin to combat these instincts

As distinct from legal Marxists and Mensheviks Lenin detected even the slightest symptoms of revolutionary sentiments and the possibility of merging them in a single current. Lenin had a keen eye for most deep going and hardly discernible processes in the spiritual life of society. He possessed this knack at all times during the rise and decline of revolutionary activity before and after the October Revolution.

Lenin stressed the need for studying the people's aspirations as they invariably reflect mass psychology. In 1920 he wrote: "we must learn to approach the masses with particular patience and caution so as to be able to understand the distinctive features in the mentality of each stratum, calling etc. of these masses."² The economic and social conditions of every class, every stratum and every profession help shape the psychology of each particular group. He therefore strongly felt that the psychological aspect should be taken into account in defining the characteristic features of the proletariat for instance. He deemed it necessary to define the term worker in such a way as to include only those who have acquired a proletarian mentality from their very conditions of life. But this is impossible unless the persons concerned have worked in a factory for many years—not from ulterior motives but because of the general conditions of their economic and social life.³

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 11 pp 201-203

² Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 31 p 192

³ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 33 p 257

In every concrete case in every element of revolutionary practice Lenin sought to fathom the psychology and sentiments of social forces

Please write speedily and let us know what the feeling is in this respect, ¹ he used to ask in his correspondence He considered for instance that the workers deputy should have learned from a number of prominent and influential workers *how matters stood* what the workers *thought* about it, and *what the mood* of the masses was ² Lenin pointed to a wide range of information on social psychology that is essential for guiding a mass movement Hostile sources should also be used he said Every effort must be made to collect verify and study these objective data concerning the behaviour and moods, not of individuals or groups but of the *masses*, data taken from different and *hostile* newspapers, data that are *verifiable* by any literate person

Only from such data can one learn and study the movement of one's class ³

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 34 p 153

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 18 p 425

³ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 20 p 382

2 SPONTANEITY AND CONSCIOUSNESS

In developing and propagating historical materialism all eminent Marxists like Antonio Labriola August Bebel Rosa Luxemburg or Georgi Plekhanov sought to show as concretely as possible how the law social being determines social consciousness operates They all paid a great deal of attention to social psychology which seemed hardly discernible at first glance but played a major role in this mechanism Indeed social consciousness consists not only of ideology (theory world outlook and systems of concepts) but psychology as well Underestimation of psychology leads to vulgarisation of the teaching on basis and superstructure It is impossible to present a concrete picture of philosophical religious and aesthetic trends and systems without studying their psychological background Such attempts led certain historians of culture to simplified analo-

gies like associating the style of the St Basil Cathedral in Moscow with the motley abundance of wares sold in Red Square. In contrast to a vulgarised concept that superstructure was a mirror-like reflection of its basis, Marxist invariably held that socio-economic relations determine by and large, not ideology but deep going unsystematic processes in social consciousness.

Georgi Plekhanov expounded the theory whereby changes in human psychology caused by socio-economic development constitute an intermediate link between economic development and the history of culture in a broad sense. Proponents of such a concept held that ideas and culture were the quintessence of social psychology. In his *Essays on the History of Materialism*, G. Plekhanov divides the entire social structure of society into five interdependent elements. A given level of development of productive forces, relationships between people determined by this level of development, a form of society expressing these relationships, a definite state of mood and morals corresponding to this form of society, religion, philosophy, literature, arts corresponding to people's capacities, tastes and inclinations brought about by this state.¹ G. Plekhanov insisted that without an element called here the state of mood and morals, otherwise known as prevailing sentiments and ideas, or in a broader sense as social psychology, it is impossible to make any appreciable progress in studying the history of literature, arts, philosophy, etc.

¹ G. Plekhanov *Izbrannyye Filosofskyye Proizvedeniya* (*Selected Philosophical Works*) Moscow 1956 Vol. 2 p. 171

He wrote To comprehend the history of scientific thought or the history of arts in a given country it is not enough to know its economy From economy one should be able to go over to social psychology without a thorough study and understanding of which it is impossible to give a materialistic explanation of the history of ideologies ¹ Eventually he formulated that same thought in a more concise form All ideologies have one common root—the psychology of a given epoch ²

Plekhanov like other Marxists was correct in declaring that an ideology does not directly stem from economic changes but is a reflection of social psychology being its ideological quintessence Conversely ideology has a profound impact on social psychology In other words there is an interaction between the two Looking upon ideology as the mere quintessence of social psychology is to lose sight of continuity of relative inner logic in the evolution of ideology from one stage to another Apparently it would be more correct to consider that both sides of social consciousness—psychology and ideology—have their own specific laws and structures But it is socio-psychological phenomena developing on a given socio economic basis that set ideas in motion or hold them back

Lenin repeatedly emphasised that feelings sentiments instincts in short the psychological make up of different classes and groups result

¹ G Plekhanov *Izbrannye Filosofskiyе Proizvedeniya* (*Selected Philosophical Works*) Moscow 1956 Vol 2 p 171

² Ibid Vol 3 p 180

from their economic conditions and basic economic interests This is the primary and most important source of socio-psychological phenomena It is impossible to conduct propaganda among the working masses without putting forth economic demands The masses are drawn into the movement, participate vigorously in it, value it highly and display heroism self sacrifice perseverance and devotion to the great cause only if it makes for improving the economic condition of those who work ¹ Lenin wrote To delete economic demands from programme would mean abandoning the economic interests which impel the masses of downtrodden cowed ignorant people to wage a great and unprecedentedly selfless struggle ² Revolution breaks out not because scores or hundreds of bourgeois politicians grumble or express their liberal indignation but because scores of millions of little people consider their lot unbearable It is there in the midst of the masses that a democratic revolution ripens quietly The economic situation predetermines both temporary political passivity and somnolence and also an urge for revolution and socialism of different toiling classes For instance the petty bourgeois mass owing to its economic situation is prepared for astonishing credulity and lack of consciousness it is still in the state of semi-slumber And conversely among the proletarian mass Social Democracy is meeting with an instinctive *urge* towards socialism ³

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 18 p 85

² Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 11 p 423

³ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 9 p 388

Lenin was not afraid of using such expressions as "class instinct", "instinct of the revolutionary class", "class feeling", etc. He spoke of "instinct" in a socio-psychological, and not in a biological, sense. On different occasions Lenin used many different expressions to denote this lowest and most subjective stratum of social mobility or immobility. He analysed a working man's deep hatred for oppressors and arrived at a major theoretical conclusion: "In a representative of the oppressed and exploited masses, this hatred is truly the 'beginning of all wisdom', the basis of any socialist and communist movement and of its success."¹ A half-blind feeling turns into half-blind action. "The unorganised street crowds, quite spontaneously and hesitatingly, set up the first barricades."² The wavering political position of the bourgeois parties "...is irritating the masses, ...is pushing them towards insurrection."³

Or conversely, an unconscious mood, a habitual sentiment holds up the development of a progressive social action. In his article "The Importance of Gold" Lenin wrote: "We shall not surrender to 'sentimental socialism', or to the old Russian, semi-aristocratic, semi-muzhik and patriarchal mood, with their supreme contempt for trade."

It is namely unconscious, instinctive and unaccountable sentiments and actions stemming directly from vital requirements and interests that

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 31, p. 80.

² Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 11, p. 172.

³ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, p. 60.

⁴ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 33, p. 175.

constitute the characteristic feature of social psychology in its proper sense

Lenin's analysis of the world outlook of the Russian revolutionary democrats provides a vivid example of how social psychology is reflected in social ideology. He said that Russian progressive thought of the 19th century was a reflection not of intellectualist sentiments but namely the sentiments of peasant serfs against serfdom. It was a reflection of the protest and struggle of the broadest masses of the population against the survivals of feudalism throughout the whole system of Russian life.¹

In Lenin's works the question of psychology and ideology is often posed as the question of spontaneity and consciousness. There is a close interrelation between them. Spontaneity and consciousness also interact in revolutionary movement. Consciousness developed from spontaneity and surmounted it. Lenin emphasised their contradictory nature. In speaking of the difference between the spreading of political consciousness and the growth of mass indignation he noted that political consciousness should be fostered by Social Democracy whereas mass indignation was spontaneous.

Lenin repeatedly pointed to such simultaneous and interacting impact of thinking and unaccountable psychological changes on the class struggle of the proletariat and the destinies of the revolutionary movement. In 1905 he wrote the following about three transitions in the working class Social Democratic movement. Each of these transitions was prepared on the one hand

¹ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 16 p 125

by socialist thought working mainly in one direction and on the other by the profound changes that had taken place in the conditions of life and in the whole mentality of the working class as well as by the fact that increasingly wider strata of the working class were roused to more conscious and active struggle ¹

Such concern for thinking and psychological make-up for ideas and sentiments attests to Lenin's comprehensive analysis of the social consciousness of the classes and masses

In the process of direct revolutionary activity Lenin accentuates the conflict and unity of opposites in the sphere of social consciousness social psychology and ideology are opposites in a way but cannot exist without each other As a matter of fact totally unconscious behaviour of people on the one hand and scientific consciousness on the other are exact opposites in this sense This is how Lenin uses the word unconscious in his work *What the Friends of the People Are and How They Fight Against Social Democrats* It never has been the case nor is it so now that the members of society conceive the sum total of the social relations in which they live as something definite integral pervaded by some principle on the contrary the mass of people adapt themselves to these relations unconsciously and have so little conception of them as specific historical social relations that for instance an explanation of the exchange relations under which people have lived for centuries was found only in very recent times ² But between

¹ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 8 p 211

² *Lenin, Coll Works* Vol 1 p 139

man's unconscious adaptation to social life which is a far cry from logical thinking and cognition and theoretical scientific explanation of social life there exists a large area in which these two mutually antagonistic elements in various combinations with each other constitute social psychology and ideology. Social psychology is closer to the pole of unconscious adaptation but there is a certain degree of involvement of consciousness here. Consequently the opposition of social psychology to ideology is not absolute but rather relative with many transitional stages. Sometimes these two notions even stand very close to each other in Lenin's works. For instance This psychology and ideology much as it may be vague is unusually deep-rooted in every worker and peasant '1

By the term spontaneity Lenin meant those aspects of social psychology which tend to gravitate towards unconsciousness though never coincide with it. Mainly two groups of phenomena belong to this category 1) the wretchedness of people their submissiveness to misery and lack of rights a habit for being oppressed 2) protest indignation rebelliousness but directed only against a source of hardships and not supported by social theory hence being of negative character

Lenin had a very negative attitude to the first group of phenomena. He urged all revolutionary Marxists to surmount such a formidable handicap in the psychology of all working masses and strata. Servility according to him was the

¹ Lenin Coll Works Vol 25 p 29

antithesis to any revolutionary perspective to any revolutionary action

In 1901 Lenin wrote Just as the peasant has grown accustomed to his wretched poverty to living his life without pondering over the causes of his wretchedness or the possibility of removing it so the plain Russian subject has become accustomed to the omnipotence of the government to living on without a thought as to whether the government can retain its arbitrary power any longer and whether side by side with it there are not forces undermining the outmoded political system ¹ Of course by such undermining forces Lenin meant, above all the development of the working class But in the working class too Lenin discerned the remnants of this psychology of wretchedness and servility

Lenin paid a great deal of attention to the second group of phenomena

Doctrinaire attitude to spontaneity was utterly alien to him He wrote It is beyond all doubt that the spontaneity of the movement is proof that it is deeply rooted in the masses that its roots are firm and that it is inevitable ² The spontaneous element in essence represents nothing more nor less than consciousness in an *embryonic form* Even the primitive revolts expressed the awakening of consciousness to a certain extent The workers were losing their age long faith in the permanence of the system which oppressed them and began I shall not say to understand but to sense the

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 5 p 25

² Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 26 p 31

necessity for collective resistance definitely abandoning their slavish submission to the authorities But this was nevertheless more in the nature of outbursts of desperation and vengeance than of *struggle* ¹

Revolutionary Marxists value this form of spontaneity not because it is capable of bringing about theoretical consciousness, but because it creates favourable conditions for its propaganda and assimilation The political sentiments and spontaneous movement of the working class were according to Lenin the chief source sustaining revolutionary Social Democracy They helped to speedily spread the ideas of Marxism in Russia Revolutionary ideologists are capable of coping with political tasks in the genuine and most practical sense of the term for the reason and to the extent that their impassioned propaganda meets with response among the spontaneously awakening masses and their sparkling energy is answered and supported by the energy of the revolutionary class ² Such was Lenin's reply to the question of educated revolutionaries What is to be done? Once it is equipped with Marxist revolutionary theory the youth can gain strength and bring this theory to the spontaneously awakening masses The revolutionary democrat while submitting a report to his higher ups or even before submitting it reveals and exposes every evil and every shortcoming before the people to arouse *their* activity ³ Marxism enables the revolutionary to

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 5 pp 374 375

² *Ibid* p 447

³ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 25 p 134

explain to the workers the genuine causes of their hardships and opens up for him the widest perspectives and (if one may so express it) places at his disposal the mighty force of many millions of workers spontaneously rising for the struggle ¹

Somnolence and awakening are a one-way movement. Scientific theory its conversion into comprehensively elaborated socio political ideology and propaganda constitute a contrary movement. Lenin emphasised that it was insufficient to bring to the consciousness of Russian workers only the basic propositions of political economy elucidating the nature of capitalist exploitation or the basic propositions of scientific communism. This is not enough to ensure the coupling of scientific theory with their feelings of protest and wrath. The point is that the Russian worker lives in a peasant country by and large he himself is yesterday's peasant or has contact with them. Besides he lives in conditions characterised by prevailing semi serfdom institutions and the autocratic bureaucratic apparatus of power. He must be made conscious of scientific theory which should be well-elaborated and comprehensible enough to be able to explain to him not only his narrow class interests but the entire society surrounding him. It should make him realise that without smashing these mainstays of reaction the working class cannot succeed in its struggle against the bourgeoisie since it cannot win without the support of the village poor that without such a broad understanding of social structure and the wide

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 5 p. 392

front of the labouring masses the working class will never cease to be downtrodden and cowed capable only of sullen desperation and not of intelligent and persistent protest and struggle ¹ Indeed the workers need not only a scientific understanding of industry and industrial labour The Russian Marxists are plucking from our countryside the imaginary flowers with which the Narodniks adorn it in order that the proletariat may understand what sort of chains everywhere fetter the working people and be able to rise against them to throw them off and reach out for the real flower —socialism ²

In order to become a Social Democrat Lenin wrote in his *What Is to Be Done?* the worker must have a clear picture in his mind of the economic nature and the social and political features of the landlord and the priest, the high state official and the peasant the student and the vagabond he must know their strong and weak points he must grasp the meaning of all the catchwords and sophisms by which each class and each stratum *camouflages* its selfish strivings and its real inner workings ³

In short the contrary movement should come to be elaboration and propaganda of such a theory which would truly accord with a spontaneously awakening desire to act and fight would guide this activity and encompass the sphere of feelings through consciousness Lenin quotes Engels words that without a sense of theory among the German workers scientific socialism would

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 1 p 291

² Ibid p 236

³ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 5 p 413

never have entered their flesh and blood as much as is the case ¹ Such is the truly tremendous scope of this contrary movement according with spontaneously awakening discontent of the masses theory is capable not only of mastering their consciousness but also of entering their flesh and blood This is expressed in the maxim—theory becomes a material force once it is understood by the masses

In 1912 Lenin wrote We say that the workers and peasants who are most downtrodden by the barracks *have begun* to rise in revolt Hence the plain and obvious conclusion we must *explain* to them how and for what purpose they should prepare for a *successful* uprising ²

This was how Lenin taught Russian revolutionaries to combine scientific socialism with the mass working-class movement

But it is not only the working class that is involved in this activity There is a mass of people because the working class and increasingly varied social strata year after year produce from their ranks an increasing number of discontented people who desire to protest who are ready to render all the assistance they can in the struggle against absolutism the intolerableness of which though not yet recognised by all is more and more acutely sensed by increasing masses of the people ³ Here too Lenin points to an immense range from unconscious sentiments to scientific consciousness From his analysis of the psychology of spontaneous

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 5 p 371

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 18 pp 381 382

³ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 5 p 468

discontent he arrives at the conclusion of the need for carrying out agitation and propaganda not only among the proletariat but the other classes of society He writes Is there a basis for activity among all classes of the population? Whoever doubts this lags in his consciousness behind the spontaneous awakening of the masses The working class movement has aroused and is continuing to arouse discontent in some hopes of support for the opposition in others and in still others the realisation that the autocracy is unbearable and must inevitably fall This is quite apart from the fact that the millions of the labouring peasantry handicraftsmen petty artisans etc would always listen eagerly to the speech of any Social Democrat who is at all qualified Indeed is there a single social class in which there are no individuals groups or circles that are discontented with the lack of rights and with tyranny and therefore accessible to the propaganda of Social Democrats ? ¹

Lenin's interpretation of fraternisation at the front in 1917 supports his concept concerning spontaneity and consciousness The fraternising soldiers are actuated not by a clear-cut political idea but by the instinct of oppressed people who are tired exhausted and begin to lose confidence in capitalist promises This is a true class instinct Without this instinct the cause of the revolution would be hopeless This instinct must be transformed into political awareness ² Spontaneous fraternisation means only smashing

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 5 p 430

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 24 p 268

of the hateful barrack discipline the discipline of blind subjugation of soldiers to officers generals and capitalists But this already means the revolutionary initiative of the masses ¹ Fraternisation was spontaneous but the path was opened up to transition from fraternisation on one front to fraternisation on every front, from spontaneous fraternisation to conscious fraternisation ²

Lenin's ardent and profound interest in the psychology of protest leads to the conclusion that the latter is most eager to absorb any kind of consciousness—bourgeois ideology or the true science of proletarian socialism Such psychology of protest such spontaneity in itself is far from predetermining the choice of scientific consciousness in preference to a non scientific ideology On the contrary the spontaneous working class movement is bound according to Lenin to lead to the domination of bourgeois ideology Though socialist theory is clearer and closer to workers bourgeois ideology is far older in origin and more fully developed, and has at its disposal immeasurably more means of dissemination That's why *all* worship of the spontaneity of the working class movement, all belittling of the role of the conscious element of the role of Social Democracy *means quite independently of whether he who belittles that role desires it or not a strengthening of the influence of bourgeois ideology upon the workers* ³

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 24 p 318

² Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 25 p 25

³ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 5 pp 382 383

Such are the dialectics of Lenin's thought concerning the social psychology of spontaneous discontent and protest. He saw in this spontaneity a basis for socialist consciousness and at the same time attacked it, rejected worship of it, since subservience to spontaneity could serve as a basis for bourgeois ideology. In this way spontaneity can be both a major support and a major obstacle in the way of revolution. It is often said that the working class *spontaneously* gravitates towards socialism. This is perfectly true in the sense that socialist theory reveals the causes of the misery of the working class more profoundly and more correctly than any other theory and for that reason the workers are able to assimilate it so easily *provided*, however, this theory does not itself yield to spontaneity, *provided* it subordinates spontaneity to itself. The working class spontaneously gravitates towards socialism nevertheless most widespread bourgeois ideology spontaneously imposes itself upon the working class to a still greater degree.¹

These ideas of Lenin help us to understand the contradictions and interconnections of social psychology and ideology, spontaneity and consciousness, unconsciousness and science. As can be seen as far back as 1901 Lenin sought to comprehend the entire unconscious and spontaneous socio-psychological phenomena which nevertheless are subjected to one or another ideology in order to provide an answer to the question: What is to be done? The same holds true with regard to his later activities.

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 5 p 336

3 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE VANGUARD AND THE MASSES

A study of Lenin's remarks on social psychology reveals that in the final count all these observations serve one purpose—to take a correct account of the conditions of the Party's revolutionary activity to make a true appraisal of the socio-psychological medium for which Party slogans are intended and thus measure the effectiveness of its work. Lenin shrewdly perceived amidst different strata of the proletariat and peasantry high tides of revolutionary energy followed by temporary ebbs, at times dejection and apathy¹ depending on the general political situation.

He saw the entire range of changes after the revolutionary upsurge of 1905-07 came a

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 16 p 289

period of an enormous decline in the energy of the masses ¹ in different historical conditions, during the war difficulties of 1918 there was a prospect of victory if the necessary turn in the mood of the people takes place This turn is developing and perhaps much time is required but it will come when the great mass of the people will not say what they are saying now ² The Party accordingly varied the methods of its work among the masses

Here we are only concerned with the psychological aspect of Lenin's teaching on relationships between the Party and the masses and classes which is closely linked with the other aspects

The relations between the organised vanguard and the mass are an example of Leninist dialectics

In the first place Lenin repeatedly stressed that the best, the most revolutionary vanguard the most experienced workers party is only a drop in the immense popular ocean and is powerless if the ocean remains still He wrote that even the finest of vanguards express the class-consciousness, will passion and imagination of tens of thousands whereas at moments of great upsurge and the exertion of all human capacities, revolutions are made by the class-consciousness will passion and imagination of tens of millions spurred on by a most acute struggle of classes ³

Lenin was not afraid of noting the Party's lag

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 16 p 227

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 27 p 108

³ Lenin, *Coll. Works* Vol 31 pp 95 96

ging behind spontaneous shifts in the revolutionary psychology of the masses during a sweeping revolutionary upsurge January 9 1905 fully revealed the vast reserve of revolutionary energy possessed by the proletariat as well as the utter inadequacy of Social Democratic organisation ¹ Lenin promptly drew a practical conclusion from the sweeping growth of the masses of the proletariat and peasantry who had re-awakened to political and revolutionary life after the January 1905 events To drop metaphor we must considerably increase the membership of all Party and Party-connected organisations in order to be able to keep up to some extent with the stream of popular revolutionary energy which has been a hundredfold strengthened ² He remarked in a letter at that time

With the gigantic movement that there is now no single CC in the world under conditions where the Party is illegal could satisfy a thousandth part of the demands made on it. Personally I would willingly postpone it (the uprising—Ed) But, then nobody asks us anyway ³ A congress was needed to prepare an uprising on the basis of the practical experiences of the functionaries and on the basis of the mood of the working-class masses ⁴ Lenin repeated time and again that the Party did not keep abreast of the activity of the masses Events have shown he wrote that we are dealing not with an uprising of the uncivilised masses but

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol. 8 p. 167

² Ibid. p. 217

³ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol. 34 p. 360

⁴ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol. 8 p. 369

with an uprising of politically conscious masses capable of carrying on an organised struggle We must ascertain the mood of the proletariat whether the workers consider themselves fit to struggle and to lead the struggle ¹ A little later the Moscow events have shown that we are still inclined to underestimate the revolutionary activity of the masses ² In subsequent historical periods Lenin also spoke highly of the initiative of the working class He said for example in 1919 that Soviet power had been able to hold out in the villages only because it had been receiving the sincere support of the majority of the working people and added We have been receiving this support because the urban workers have established contact with the rural poor in thousands of ways of which we have not even an inkling ³

This however is only one pole of the dialectics To begin with Lenin oriented the Party's work not only for the period of powerful upsurge but also for the period of calm when the Party was required to conduct political agitation ⁴ to awaken the broad masses The principal thing is that the vanguard is a vanguard because it is capable of carrying away and firing the masses And it has frequently happened at critical moments in the life of nations that even small advanced detachments of advanced classes have carried the rest with them have fired the masses with revolutionary enthusiasm and

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 8 p 370

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 9 p 384 387

³ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 29 p 76

⁴ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 5 p 514

have accomplished tremendous historical feats ¹ This role of the vanguard has been accomplished in history not by mere propaganda of an advanced theory but the propagation of enthusiasm by igniting the fire of revolutionary sentiment Lenin wrote All great political changes have come about through the enthusiasm of the vanguard whom the masses followed spontaneously not quite consciously ²

When in 1905 the Party set forth the slogan to concentrate on non parliamentary means of struggle it was the battle-cry of men who really were at the head of the masses at the head of millions of fighting workers and peasants The fact that these millions responded to the call proved that the slogan was *objectively correct* and that it expressed not merely the convictions of a handful of revolutionaries but the actual situation the temper and the initiative of the masses ³ The masses instinctively feel that we are right Lenin wrote in 1916 ⁴ In other words the Party's slogans fell on receptive socio psychological soil and met the objective interests of the masses Therein lay the strength of the Bolshevik Party Lenin stressed in 1917 It is we and we alone who take into account the change in the mood of the masses as well as something besides something far more important and more profound than moods and changes in moods namely the fundamental interests of the masses The Bolsheviks Lenin went on turned

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 27 p 395

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 33 p 174

³ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 15 p 339

⁴ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 23 p 27

their backs on chauvinism so as to express the interests of the masses and call them to revolution and use their change of mood not to pander to a given mood in an unprincipled manner but to wage a struggle on principle for a complete rupture with social chauvinism ¹

We see that Lenin was against the Party blindly following mass psychology. He stated directly: Naturally we shall not submit to everything the masses say because the masses too sometimes—particularly in time of exceptional weariness and exhaustion resulting from excessive hardship and suffering—yield to sentiments that are in no way advanced ²

Such is on the psychological plane the dialectics of relationships between the mass and the vanguard or as Lenin wrote in *What Is to Be Done?* of the rank and file and professional revolutionaries ³ The Party must always be with the masses it must go where the masses go and try at every step to push the consciousness of the masses in the direction of socialism ⁴ The Party also wins its leading role by always being together with the masses by inspiring and guiding them by its efforts. Yet history is essentially made by the working masses. Lenin wrote in 1905 that the working class felt an instinctive urge for open revolutionary action and the Party should learn to set the aims of this action correctly that is to lead the proletariat and not merely to lag in the wake of

¹ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 25 p 271

² *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 33 p 39

³ *Lenin, Coll Works* Vol 5 p 465

⁴ *Lenin, Coll Works* Vol 15 p 354

events ¹ In early 1917 he pointed out that the *only effective* force that compels change is popular revolutionary energy which finds expression in comprehensive mass revolutionary propaganda agitation and organisation conducted by parties marching at the head of the revolution not limping along in its tail ² Socialism cannot be decreed from above Its spirit rejects the mechanical bureaucratic approach living creative socialism is the product of the masses themselves ³

Let us recall how Lenin put the question of the Party's duty with regard to the mood of the masses in July 1917 He commented on the growing popular discontent impatience and indignation It was the imperative duty of the proletarian party to remain with the masses and try to lend as peaceable and organised a character as possible to their justified action ⁴

Let us recall how boldly Lenin faced the peasants' desire for equal division of the land after the October Revolution gave the key economic and political positions to the proletariat Experience is the best teacher and it will show who is right. Let the peasants solve this problem from one end and we shall solve it from the other Experience will oblige us to draw together in the general stream of revolutionary creative work in the elaboration of new state forms We must be guided by experience we

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 9 pp 18 19

² Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 23 p 213

³ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 26 p 288

⁴ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 25 pp 203 204

must allow complete freedom to the creative faculties of the masses ¹

Let us recall at last how Lenin argued for the need for a political respite in 1918 the Bolsheviks had convinced the people they had won influence over them from the rich yet the ruin the famine the consequences of the war— all this has inevitably caused extreme weariness and even exhaustion of wide sections of the working people These people insistently demand—and cannot but demand—a respite ²

Thus Lenin appraised the Party's attitude to the creator and decisive force of history the toiling masses This is the only yardstick to be applied to it both by political practice and history Any false note in the position of any party immediately lands that party where it deserves to be ³ With this understanding of the relationship between the Party and the masses Lenin paid much attention both to the psychology of the masses and that of the Party members on several occasions he sternly criticised the latter

In 1922 Lenin wrote The economic power in the hands of the proletarian state of Russia is quite adequate to ensure the transition to communism What then is lacking? Obviously what is lacking is culture among the stratum of the Communists who perform administrative functions ⁴

At the same time Lenin found strong impres

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 26 p 261

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 27 p 243

³ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 28 p 27

⁴ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 33 p 288

sive words to say about the ideological and psychological prestige of the Party and its representatives among the masses. He wrote in 1907 that after the split with the Mensheviks it was necessary to arouse among the masses hatred aversion and contempt for these people who had *ceased* to be members of a united party ¹ These words are a good illustration of the importance Lenin attached to the sentiments the masses had for the Bolsheviks whose agitation and propaganda had always been an appeal to the people's sentiments ² as Lenin wrote about the manifesto of the Third International This factor coupled with scientific soundness and objectivity gave strength and conviction to all Party slogans and appeals. Make the Soviets an organ of insurrection an organ of revolutionary power! Apart from this the Soviets are a meaningless plaything that can only produce apathy indifference and disillusion among the masses who are legitimately disgusted at the endless repetition of resolutions and protests ³

The strength of the Party was in the clarity of its agitation and the influence of its example. What is expected of us is propaganda by example the non Party masses have to be set an example. Lenin wrote ⁴ He urged to develop mass agitation in 1918 among the workers and peasants of the famine-stricken gubernias in particular for a crusade for grain to Yelets Uyezd where yields had been good ⁵

¹ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 12 p 426

² *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 29 p 192

³ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 26 p 143

⁴ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 31 p 433

⁵ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 35 p 347

Here is another example of the great importance Lenin invariably attached to psychology and the socio-psychological tasks of Party work. When speaking at a meeting about the Red Army's successes in 1919 he pointed out that they were due entirely to intensification of Party activities and to cultural and educational work in the ranks of the Red Army. This brought about a psychological change, and as a result our Red Army won the Don region for us.¹

To take into account psychological change, to bring about this change, is, from the viewpoint of social psychology the dual task of the Party in guiding the masses, in attaining the goals of the revolution, in building socialism.

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works*, Vol. 29 p. 51

4. SUMMATION OF REVOLUTIONARY SENTIMENTS

Prior to the triumph of the October Socialist Revolution Lenin's interest in socio-psychological processes and phenomena was oriented quite differently than after its victory. Before the victory the comprehensive communist education of the masses was not the active purpose of Leninist social psychology. He described such orientation as deception of the workers by the parties and leaders of the Second International. While socio-economic conditions remain capitalist, while the working people remain under bourgeois oppression which sometimes takes refined forms it would be deceitful to assume that the majority of the exploited was capable of developing firm socialist convictions and character. It is only when exploitation is done away with, Lenin wrote, "only after this, and only in the actual process of an acute class struggle, that the masses of the toilers and exploited can

be educated trained and organised around the proletariat under whose influence and guidance they can get rid of the selfishness disunity vices and weaknesses engendered by private property only then will they be converted into a free union of free workers ¹

Before the victory of the socialist revolution all Lenin's observations and thoughts on social psychology gravitated to one decisive purpose In the conditions of an autocratic-capitalist system the important thing was concentration merging and thus boosting revolutionary sentiments and overcoming moods which retarded the revolution

It was the task of the older generation Lenin said in 1920 to overthrow the bourgeoisie arouse hatred of the bourgeoisie among the masses and foster class consciousness and the ability to unite their forces ²

This was by no means a simple and direct process On the one hand as was shown by the 1905 revolution The long and undivided rule of the autocracy has stored up revolutionary energy among the people to a degree perhaps never before known in history ³ On the other hand that people were part of capitalist society and the reform not free from the shortcomings and weaknesses of capitalist society It (the proletariat—*Ed*) is fighting for socialism but at the same time it is fighting against its own shortcomings ⁴ Yet at times these shortcomings overrun it When the First World War flared up

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 31 p 187

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 31 p 290

³ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 8 p 448

⁴ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 29 p 208

Everywhere the bourgeoisie vanquished the proletariat for a time and swept them into the turbid spate of nationalism and chauvinism ¹ But in the final count the main trend made itself felt

The essence of that basic trend was increasing psychological awareness and clear understanding that the existing society was divided into two opposed camps—us and them Lenin wrote of this with great force This member of the oppressed class however even though one of the well paid and quite intelligent workers takes the bull by the horns with that astonishing simplicity and straightforwardness with that firm determination and amazing clarity of outlook from which we intellectuals are as remote as the stars in the sky The whole world is divided into two camps us the working people and them the exploiters What a painful thing is this exceptionally complicated situation created by the revolution that's how the bourgeois intellectual thinks and feels We squeezed them a bit they won't dare to lord it over us as they did before We'll squeeze again—and chuck them out altogether that's how the worker thinks and feels ²

We shall return to the extensive theoretical significance for social psychology as a science of this us and them principles briefly outlined by Lenin

At this point it interests us as a concrete indication of the complete maximum maturity of the proletariat's revolutionary spirit Once the

¹ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 21 p 418

² *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 26 p 120

awareness of the world's separation into us and them has been formed the decisive battle is inevitable. The determination of the working class wrote Lenin its inflexible adherence to the watchword "Death rather than surrender!" is not only a historical factor it is the decisive the winning factor.¹ This factor urges the proletariat to give armed battle and win. An exploited class which did not *strive* to possess arms to know how to use them and to master the military art would be a class of lackeys.²

Although Lenin held that the task of complete liberation of the spirit of the masses from capitalist heritage became possible only after the socialist revolution the very revolutionary struggle the revolution itself served as a powerful educator of the masses.

The real education of the masses can never be separated from their independent political and especially revolutionary struggle. Only struggle educates the exploited class. Only struggle discloses to it the magnitude of its own power widens its horizon enhances its abilities clarifies its mind forges its will.³ When a revolutionary war attracted and interested the oppressed people Lenin said it engendered the strength and ability to perform miracles.⁴

This is true both of the foremost revolutionary class the proletariat and the peasantry. In Lenin's words: "Out of a mob of muzhiks repressed by feudal slavery of accursed memory this

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 30 p 454

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 35 p 195

³ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 23 p 241

⁴ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 30 p. 153

(1905—*Ed*) revolution created for the first time in Russia a people beginning to understand its rights beginning to realise its strength ¹

While there was no such reciprocal influence of the revolution itself on the psychology of masses in the pre revolutionary peaceful conditions all of Lenin's socio psychological observations were centred on one single task—to make the best possible appraisal and unite those potential forces in society which could directly or indirectly bring closer the onset and victory of the revolution. It was the job of tirelessly merging all separate rivulets streams and drops of social protest. This undoubtedly required first of all the pursuit of the objective final community of interests yet the immediate task was the subjective the psychological aspect. The task as Lenin saw it was to gather if one may so put it and concentrate all these drops and streamlets of popular resentment that are brought forth to a far larger extent than we imagine by the conditions of Russian life and that must be combined into a *single* gigantic torrent ² Leninist science of revolution demanded such scientific detection of any signs of upsurge even utterly insignificant tendencies which could be brought together and summed up in the revolutionary camp. Lenin wrote as early as 1901 that public unrest was growing among the entire people in Russia and it was the duty of Social Democrats to teach progressive working class intellectuals to take advantage of the fla

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 17 p 89

² Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 5 p 420

shes of social protest that break out now in one place now in another ¹

The foremost task was the summing up of the manifestations of discontent and protest among the working class Lenin described with amazing precision certain psychological regularities of the effect the actions of one group of workers had on others the workers of neighbouring factories gain renewed courage when they see that their comrades have engaged themselves in struggle It is often enough for one factory to strike for strikes to begin immediately in a large number of factories What a great moral influence strikes have how they affect workers who see that their comrades have ceased to be slaves and if only for the time being have become people on an equal footing with the rich! ² This infection goes beyond spreading such moods and actions it also raises them to a new level

When the movement is in its early stage wrote Lenin the economic strike often has the effect of awakening and stirring up the backward of making the movement a general one of raising it to a higher plane ³ In 1905 Lenin gave a vivid description of one such quantitative and qualitative shift The composers strike in Moscow we are informed was started by politically backward workers But the movement immediately slipped out of their control and became a broad trade union movement Workers of other trades joined in Street demonstrations by workers inevitable if only for the purpose

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 5 p 288

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 4 p 315

³ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 18 p 84

of letting uninformed fellow workers learn of the strike turned into political demonstrations with revolutionary songs and speeches Long suppressed bitterness against the vile farce of popular elections to the State Duma came to the surface ¹

Lenin thus commented on the influence of the workers strike movement on the sympathies and sentiments of the peasants Only the waves of mass strikes roused the broad masses of peasants from their lethargy The word striker acquired an entirely new meaning among the peasants it signified a rebel a revolutionary a term previously expressed by the word student But the student belonged to the middle class to the learned to the gentry and was therefore alien to the people The striker on the other hand was of the people he belonged to the exploited class ² This observation traced once again the shaping of the us and them anti thesis among the people Many little bridges were built such as the preference of the word striker to the word student creating a psychological community of the workers and the peasants and their common alienation from the gentlemen although the socio-economic roots of the peasants and the workers revolutionary sentiments were quite different

Lenin spoke of the apathy of the peasants only in a political sense meaning their alienation from the proletarian movement The peasants came to 1905 with their own blind revolutionism The peasant needs land and his revolu

¹ Lenin Coll Works Vol 9 p 348

² Lenin Coll Works Vol 23 p 243

tionary feeling his instinctive primitive sense of democracy *cannot* express itself otherwise than by laying hands on the landlords lands ¹

Lenin associated this psychological trait with economic peculiarities—there were more remnants of serfdom in the agriculture of Russia than anywhere else hence greater primitive and direct revolutionism among the peasantry and the working class closely linked with them Yet this revolutionary sentiment Lenin explained undoubtedly expressed a general protest rather than proletarian class consciousness ²

Both Mensheviks and Economists paid lip service to social psychology but to them the psychological differences between the workers and the peasants only served to support the *apriori* dogmatic thesis that no consistent union was possible between the working class and the peasantry in a revolution Having thus built a stone wall between the proletariat and the peasantry they were incapable of taking a single revolutionary view of the moods of both

Lenin boldly refuted these dogmas showed their incompatibility with Marxism He saw with absolute clarity that revolution in Russia as in many other countries could win only by bringing together all mass forces of protest and social discontent, that to disunite them in keeping with scholastic dogmas would be tantamount to betraying the revolution Genuine unity of the revolutionary efforts of the proletariat and the peasantry required a study of both common and specific features of their social psychology and

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 8 p 247

² Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 12 p 64

through this the possibilities of the workers psychological influence on the peasant mass Lenin described the weaknesses and vices of peasant psychology in a severe and realistic manner The peasants were soothed as one soothes little children How did they deceive the peasants? By feeding them with promises ¹ Above we have read Lenin's description of the non revolutionary reactionary aspect of peasant psychology Yet even when speaking of its revolutionary side he tirelessly stresses it is not up to the level of proletarian revolutionism However he wrote solidarity organisation and class-consciousness are naturally much less developed among the peasants than among the workers Thus there still remains an almost untapped field of serious and rewarding work of political education ² These last words show that he did not consider the situation hopeless Yet, it is of importance that the peasant mass including the village poor because of their economic position have always and in every country proved to be less persistent in their struggle for liberty and for socialism than the workers ³

All these observations of Lenin serve one purpose—to find everything including psychological traits that may be employed not to divide but to unite the workers and peasants in common revolutionary action There was for example a remarkable point which gladdened Lenin at a time when a certain lack of understanding had developed between Soviet proletarian power

¹ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 25 pp 146 147

² *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 17 p 382

³ *Lenin, Coll Works* Vol 11 p 395

and the peasants (1921) He writes of a peasant who was not in sympathy with the Soviet government on several points The poor peasants of his district had called him a bourgeois and he felt this to be an affront a disgraceful name And there is a world of meaning in the fact that this term has come to be regarded as an odious one by the peasants It is the basis of our propaganda and agitation and the influence exercised by the working class through the state ¹ To Lenin this fact was one of the numerous signs that the working class was guaranteed the support of the peasant masses except for the kulaks and profiteers This purely psychological point marked a certain stage in the shaping of us in which the peasants together with the workers oppose themselves to them the bourgeois

Thus it was not only at times of revolution or revolutionary situations but also in the years of rudimentary forms of revolutionary struggle even in the years of dark reaction and decline that Lenin's mind invariably sought and detected the seeds of revolutionary possibilities of the popular masses their spontaneous and unconscious moods of discontent and protest in order to add up and multiply them

When he was interested in opposite psychological phenomena such as traditions habits and customs accumulated by the people over centuries he did so with a view to possible removal of these obstacles from the path of the revolution

The force of habit in millions and tens of millions is a most formidable force wrote Lenin ²

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 32 p 118

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 31 p 44

To overcome habits is a tremendous job before the revolution and even after its victory. The struggle against habits that in the course of hundreds and thousands of years have become second nature to every petty proprietor is something that requires many long years of persistent organisational work after the exploiting classes have been completely overthrown.¹ What then can be said of the burden of habit in the dark pre-revolutionary years! Lenin remarked with regard to the violation of Finland's Constitution in 1901:

We are still slaves to such an extent that we are employed to reduce other peoples to slavery.²

But Lenin paid much less attention to such psychological traits and features as habits and submissiveness than to adding up even by tiny grains the sentiments of discontent and struggle.

The people seemed to be asleep yet their sleep was so light that on the slightest ground they might jump up in great excitement. Lenin spoke of this duality in a lecture on the 1905 Revolution. The broad masses however were still too naive their mood was too passive too good natured too Christian. They flared up rather quickly any instance of injustice excessively harsh treatment by the officers bad food etc could lead to revolt.³ The same psychological trait of the masses excitability as it were was noted by Lenin in 1905. Mock elections will never rouse the masses he wrote. However a strike a demonstration mutiny in the armed forces a serious students outbreak famine mobilisation or a con-

¹ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 29 p 523

² *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 5 p 310

³ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 23 p 245

fluct in the State Duma etc etc etc can really rouse the masses constantly at any hour ¹

All these were grains which would in time add up to be one action against the monarchy and the existing system of all forces of protest accumulating in society. The growth of mass strikes the enlistment of other classes in the struggle the state of the organisations and the temper of the masses will all suggest of themselves the moment when all forces must unite ²

Despite persisting naive faith in the tsar and primitiveness of social views Lenin emphasised the significance of the revolutionary instinct now asserting itself among the proletariat. The political protest of the leading oppressed class and its revolutionary energy break through all obstacles both external in the form of police bans and internal in the form of the ideological immaturity and backwardness of some of the leaders ³

Lenin noted a similar disruption of habits and traditions in describing the experiences of the masses in the First World War. He wrote of millions of semi-proletarians and petty bourgeois deceived by chauvinism whom the horrors of war will not only intimidate and depress but also enlighten teach arouse organise steel and prepare for the war against the bourgeoisie of their own country and foreign countries ⁴. In 1917 Lenin wrote of this with greater certainty—the Russian people—who have always shed blood without a murmur and have done the will of an oppressor

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 9 p 366

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 15 p 109

³ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 8 p 93

⁴ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 21 p 40

ve government when quite ignorant of its aims and purposes—will undoubtedly throw their weight into the struggle with so much more courage and vigour when it came to fighting for socialism. . .”¹

In conclusion we would like to make the following two points.

Why was Lenin certain that the moods of protest and discontent, the force of resistance would be inevitably summed up? First of all, because the proletariat plays the role of liberator not only of itself, but also of all working people, all society, from exploitation and antagonism. Further, because this authority of the working class relies in turn on the authority of the world revolutionary experience and movement. The working class needs authority, wrote Lenin. “The proletarians of every country need the authority of the worldwide struggle of the proletariat. We need the authority of the theoreticians of international Social-Democracy to enable us properly to understand the programme and tactics of our Party. But, of course, this authority has nothing in common with the official authorities in bourgeois science and police politics.”²

Finally, it is to be noted that Lenin had an equally clear understanding of the psychology of the masses and of the upper classes. Whereas at one social pole you have growing protest and wrath, on the other, you have the development of opposing attitudes of the upper classes. We shall quote an example of how Lenin characterised these attitudes. “Generally speaking, it must be said that our reactionaries (including, of course, the entire

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, p. 346.

² Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 11, pp. 412-413.

top bureaucracy) reveal a fine political instinct. They are so well experienced in combatting oppositions, popular revolts, religious sects, rebellions and revolutionaries that they are always on the *qui vive* and understand far better than naive simpletons and honest fogies that the autocracy can never reconcile itself to self reliance, honesty, independence, convictions and pride in real knowledge of *any kind whatsoever*. So thoroughly imbued are they with the spirit of subservience and red tape that prevails in the hierarchy of Russian officialdom that they have contempt for any one who is unlike Gogol's Akaky Akakiyevich or to use a more contemporary simile the Man in a Case.¹

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 5 pp 281 282

5 FROM THE FIRST RUSSIAN REVOLUTION TO THE SECOND

Lenin's observations and statements relating to social psychology if arranged chronologically would appear to centre mainly around two historical landmarks—the 1905-07 Revolution and the years of 1917-22. Twice his thought delved especially deep into the most subjective, most intimate aspects of the life of classes and of the masses in general. Not being a professional psychologist, Lenin nevertheless was a psychologist as a politician and a revolutionary. And it is only natural that his psychological insight was keener at times when a revolutionary task started to materialise.

However it was not just a matter of Lenin's growing interest in the psychological aspects of revolution. He was convinced, and his conviction had been verified by life, that revolutions represented moments of extreme changes and crises in the psychology of man, of masses of people and of entire nations. At such moments a true revolutionary should be more of a psychologist than

ever Every revolution Lenin explained means a sharp turn in the lives of a vast number of people And just as any turn in the life of an individual teaches him a great deal and brings rich experience and great emotional stress so a revolution teaches an entire people very rich and valuable lessons in a short space of time During a revolution millions and tens of millions of people learn in a week more than they do in a year of ordinary somnolent life ¹

Those words were written in 1917 but as far back as 1905 at the height of the revolution Lenin felt quite the same In the history of revolutions there come to light contradictions that have ripened for decades and centuries Life becomes unusually eventful The masses which have always stood in the shade and have therefore often been ignored and even despised by superficial observers enter the political arena as active combatants These masses are learning in practice and before the eyes of the world are taking their first tentative steps feeling their way defining their objectives testing themselves and the theories of all their ideologists These masses are making heroic efforts to rise to the occasion and cope with the gigantic tasks of world significance imposed upon them by history and however great individual defeats may be however shattering to us the rivers of blood and the thousands of victims nothing will ever compare in importance with this direct training that the masses and the classes receive in the course of the revolutionary struggle itself ² Here is one more extract from Lenin's Lecture on the 1905 Revolution deli

¹ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 25 p 225

² *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 8 p 104

vered in 1917 The history of that Revolution shows how great the dormant energy of the proletariat can be In a revolutionary epoch the proletariat *can* generate fighting energy *a hundred times* greater than in ordinary peaceful times It shows that up to 1905 mankind did not yet know what a great, what a tremendous exertion of effort the proletariat is and will be capable of ¹

Quite a number of Lenin's statements on social psychology relating to the years of 1905-07 have been referred to above All of them testify to his keen interest in the psychological aspect of social life

In addition here are other observations made by Lenin in 1905 on how people had lost faith in the tsar According to Lenin as soon as the revolutionary energy and the revolutionary instinct of the working class have asserted themselves with irresistible force ² despite all police wiles and deceptions the vestige of naive faith in the tsar had to die out Generation after generation of down-trodden half-civilised rustic existence cut off from the world tended to strengthen this faith Every month of life of the new urban industrial literate Russia has been undermining and destroying this faith ³ That is why the decade of the working class movement preceding 1905 not only produced thousands of Social Democrats who consciously broke with that faith It has educated scores of thousands of workers in whom the class instinct, strengthened in the strike movement and fostered by political agitation has shattered this

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol. 23 p. 240

² Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol. 8 pp. 105-107

³ *Ibid* p. 112

faith to its foundations ¹ Hence different prognosis different political prospects The masses of workers and peasants who still retained a vestige of faith in the tsar were not ready for insurrection we said After January 9 we have the right to say that now they are ready for insurrection and will rise ²

In 1905 Lenin wrote Nor is it only the barometer that indicates a storm everything has been dislodged by the mighty whirlwind of a concerted proletarian onslaught ³ What sweeping changes occurred during the short though violent storm how many illusions were cast off and how many new psychological phenomena became evident

The bourgeoisie and the landlords have become fierce and brutal The man in the street is weary The Russian intellectual is limp and despondent The party of liberal windbags and liberal traitors the Cadets has raised its head hoping to make capital out of the prevailing weariness born of the revolution But below deep down among the proletarian masses and among the mass of the destitute starving peasantry the revolution has made headway quietly and imperceptibly undermining the foundations rousing the most somnolent with the thunder of civil war ⁴

Then the counter revolution got the upper hand and the years of reaction set in Lenin made far less statements on social psychology In 1908 for the first time he expounded on the philistines

And today in the period of sweeping counter revolutionary repressions the philistines are adapt

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 8 p 112

² Ibid p 113

³ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 9 p 392

⁴ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 12 pp 114 115

ing themselves in cowardly fashion to the new masters currying favour with the new caliphs for an hour renouncing the past trying to forget it ¹ Yet Lenin realised full well that that was a superficial process Deep down in society no force was capable of eradicating the changes that the revolution had brought about in the thinking of the masses Those changes were irreversible they lived deep in the hearts of millions of people and sooner or later were bound to come to the surface like seeds in the spring Lenin referred to the indelible trace the 1871 Paris Commune had left in the minds of millions The epic of its (the Commune s—*Ed*) life and death he wrote the sight of a workers government which seized the capital of the world and held it for over two months the spectacle of the heroic struggle of the proletariat and the torments it underwent after its defeat—all this raised the spirit of millions of workers aroused their hopes and enlisted their sympathy for the cause of socialism The thunder of the cannon in Paris awakened the most backward sections of the proletariat from their deep slumber and everywhere gave impetus to the growth of revolutionary socialist propaganda ² The 1905 December events in Russia likewise left a trace which no reaction could obliterate The heroism of the Moscow workers Lenin pointed out, set an unforgettable example to the working people started a deep ferment the effects of which never died down in spite of all persecution After December they were no longer the same people They had been reborn ³

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 15 pp 50 51

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 17 p 143

³ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 28 p 373

Proceeding from his observations Lenin at the very dawn of the new revolution noticed vague psychological symptoms of it above all among the workers The coming storm was already felt in 1910—economic and political strikes either alternated or were closely interconnected uniting the workers The proletariat has begun The democratic youth are continuing The Russian people are awakening to new struggle advancing towards a new revolution The first beginning of the struggle has shown us again that the forces are alive which shook the tsarist regime in 1905 ¹ True psychological phenomena of quite a different nature—the thirst for general theoretical knowledge—were typical of the period when there was no open struggle

With a fresh revolutionary upswing Lenin again displayed a keen interest in the psychological processes within different sections of the working class the peasantry and among other social groups That upswing was to culminate in the 1917 October revolution

Lenin recorded the slightest changes that seemed to be of very little or no importance whatsoever A spontaneous desire is to be observed to collect funds to aid the starving and to help them in other ways he noted in 1912 and added that that desire must be supported and furthered by all Social Democrats in the spirit of class struggle ²

The workers and students strikes of 1910-11 the resumption of demonstrations and rallies—all that Lenin summed up as signs of growing re-

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 16 p 358

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 17 p 459

volutionary feelings ¹ A year later in 1912 he anticipated those sentiments as a confluence of a multitude of streamlets into a single flow Signs from various quarters indicate that the weariness and stupor brought about by the triumph of the counter revolution are passing away that once again there is an *urge* for revolution ² There is inflammable material *everywhere* and *everywhere* a revolutionary mood is growing among the masses including even those workers and peasants who are held down by barrack drill ³ The *whole* of this country is getting into a ferment. The most backward sections both of the workers and the peasants are coming into direct or indirect contact with the strikers Hundreds of thousands of revolutionary agitators are all at once appearing on the scene Their influence is infinitely increased by the fact that they are inseparably linked with the rank and file with the masses and that they remain among them fight for the most urgent needs of *every* worker's family and combine with this immediate struggle for urgent economic needs their political protest and struggle against the monarchy For counter revolution has stirred up in millions and tens of millions of people a bitter hatred for the monarchy it has given them the rudiments of an understanding of the part played by it and now the slogan of the foremost workers of the capital—long live the democratic republic!—spreads through thousands of channels in the wake of every strike reaching the backward sections the remotest provinces the

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 17 p 456

² Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 18 p 103

³ *Ibid* p 235

people the depths of Russia' ¹

Lenin foresaw the coming second revolution which by 1913 displayed a much greater store of revolutionary energy in the proletariat than the first one. The revolutionary upswing was not something coming from above although political consciousness, experience and determination of the foremost class and its vanguard had increased.

But in our country this rise is taking place spontaneously because tens of millions of the semi-proletarian and peasant population are passing on if one can use this expression to their vanguard a sentiment of concentrated indignation which is surging up and overflowing ²

1913 Strike demonstrations, red banners being unfurled in the streets of the capital, revolutionary speeches and slogans brought to the crowd—such strikes, Lenin held, could not be evoked artificially. But neither could they be stopped once hundreds and hundreds of thousands were involved. Yet that kind of a strike was by itself only a means for inciting protest for arousing the indignation of the whole huge country. It is essential that the smouldering resentment and subdued murmurings of the countryside should, along with the indignation in the barracks, find a centre of attraction in the workers' revolutionary strikes ³

We shall not be considering the changes which according to Lenin occurred in the psychology of the masses both in Russia and abroad as a result of the 1914-17 World War. Part of the proletariat then turned out to have been overwhelmed by bourgeois chauvinism. Still on the whole the war

¹ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 18 pp 105 106

² *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 18 p 472

³ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 18 p 477

could not stop the urge for revolution.

Then came 1917 with revolutionary feelings reaching the point where a revolutionary crisis developed. And again the palette of Lenin the psychologist became richer, abounding in colours. Of interest in this respect is Lenin's assessment of the important fact that "the broad, unstable, and vacillating mass" which, as he put it, was closest to the peasantry, was changing camps. That mass was swinging either to the right or to the left, Lenin observed. As part of that mass, the soldiers, in the first months of 1917 "*swung away from the capitalists towards the revolutionary workers*. It was the swing or movement of this mass, strong enough to be a *decisive* factor, that caused the crisis."¹

The concept of a *revolutionary crisis* or a *revolutionary situation* is of great importance for the study of Lenin's legacy in social psychology.

It was between the two Russian revolutions that as important a part of Lenin's *science of revolution* as the doctrine of revolutionary situation, was formulated. Although original ideas of the doctrine are found in Lenin's articles written in 1904-05, on the whole it was set forth in 1913, in "May Day Action by the Revolutionary Proletariat" and "The Adjourned Duma and the Embarrassed Liberals", and expounded in 1915 in "The Collapse of the Second International". In "Left-Wing Communism—an Infantile Disorder" (1920) Lenin reiterated the essence of the doctrine on the revolutionary situation.

The doctrine is related to the subject under consideration inasmuch as it provides a graphic example of the role Lenin assigned to the psy-

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 24, p. 214.

chology sentiments and activities of the masses As is known Lenin regarded the swing of the masses from passive submission to oppression to indignation and revolt as the most important symptom determining a revolutionary situation His works written in 1915 listed the symptoms of a revolutionary situation two of which are given below (2) when the suffering and want of the oppressed classes have grown more acute than usual (3) when as a consequence of the above causes there is a considerable increase in the activity of the masses who uncomplainingly allow themselves to be robbed in peace time but in turbulent times are drawn both by all the circumstances of the crisis *and by the upper classes themselves* into independent historical action ¹

From the point of view of social psychology a crisis among the upper classes is of interest in that it leads to a rift through which the discontent and indignation of the oppressed classes burst forth ² In May Day and the War (1915) Lenin summed up the essence of a revolutionary situation as follows

(α) the lower orders won't, the upper classes can't

(β) growth of misery

(γ) extraordinary activity ³

As has been mentioned the outlines of Lenin's future doctrine on revolutionary situation were manifest in his works of 1904 for instance in the following remark the party of the proletariat must start an uprising at the moment when the

¹ Lenin Coll Works Vol 21 p 214

² Ibid p 215

³ Lenin Coll Works Vol 36 p 326

government is in the most desperate straits and popular unrest is at its highest ¹ The psychological aspect is revealed here very expressively In 1905 Lenin warned that the slogan of insurrection was inappropriate without signs of a definite crisis until the masses have definitely shown that they have been roused and are ready to act ²

Many years later, when the doctrine of a revolutionary situation had been elaborated Lenin depicted that aspect of a revolutionary situation after the 1905 January events in the following words Within a few months however, the picture changed completely The hundreds of revolutionary Social Democrats suddenly grew into thousands the thousands became the leaders of between two and three million proletarians The proletarian struggle produced widespread ferment often revolutionary movements among the peasant masses fifty to a hundred million strong the peasant movement had its reverberations in the army and led to soldiers revolts to armed clashes between one section of the army and another In this manner a colossal country with a population of 130 000 000 went into the revolution in this way dormant Russia was transformed into a Russia of a revolutionary proletariat and a revolutionary people ³

In 1915 Lenin analysed a new revolutionary situation and noted the following social psychological phenomena The smouldering indignation of the masses the vague yearning of society's downtrodden and ignorant strata for a kindly

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 8 p 27

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 9 p 369

³ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 23 p 238

(democratic¹) peace the beginning of discontent among the lower classes—all these are facts. The experience of the war like the experience of any crisis in history of any great calamity and any sudden turn in human life stuns and breaks some people *but enlightens and tempers others*.¹

Then came 1917 the great year in human history. The revolutionary situation in Europe is a fact. The extreme discontent the unrest and anger of the masses are facts. It is on strengthening this torrent that revolutionary Social Democrats must concentrate all their efforts.² In Letter to Comrades Lenin summed up what he knew about the sentiments of the masses that everybody reports it as a tense and expectant mood that everybody agrees that the workers are greatly dissatisfied with the indecision of the centres concerning the last decisive struggle that everybody unanimously characterises the mood of the broadest masses as close to desperation.³ Lenin summed up those sentiments by enough of wavering.⁴

Such was the psychological aspect of the political process rapid growth of politically active mass and the strength of that mass. Symptomatic of any genuine revolution is a rapid tenfold and even hundredfold increase in the size of the working and oppressed masses—hitherto apathetic—who are capable of waging the political struggle.⁵ Revolution is not made to order it results from an outburst of mass indignation.⁶

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 21 pp 215 216

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 23 p 270

³ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 26 p 209

⁴ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 25 p 110

⁵ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 31 p 84

⁶ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 26 p 345

6 NEW PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENA AND TASKS AFTER THE REVOLUTION

It was perhaps after the October Revolution that Lenin's insight as a psychologist became more evident. The goals were different then. Before the socialist revolution there could be no question of the comprehensive remoulding of man. It was solely the revolutionary struggle that was changing man's nature and to a considerable extent at that. After the revolution the task of expunging the survivals of capitalism from people's minds became possible although it was a painstaking and a long process.

A few days before the October insurrection Lenin unexpectedly came out with the following remark. The Party could not be guided by the temper of the masses because it was changeable and incalculable. The Party must be guided by an objective analysis and an appraisal of the revo-

lution The masses had put their trust in the Bolsheviks and demanded deeds from them and not words ¹ Indeed on the eve of the seizure of power Lenin discerned the only important sentiment—the trust of the masses in Bolsheviks all others seeming insignificant and third rate To-morrow revolution would break out And that meant that the day after tomorrow all psychological tasks would become fundamentally new to a certain degree even the opposite of those before the revolution Lenin foresaw though that a transition from historical somnolence to new historical creativeness ² from enthusiasm restricted by revolutionary tasks to enthusiasm connected with building a new life would be a protracted one And true enough a new chapter of Leninist social psychology began

From then on the main thing was to retain power Before the Revolution the main feature of the revolutionary psychology of the masses had been the urge to seize power while after the Revolution the main striving was to retain power The workers peasants and Red Army men Lenin wrote in 1920 have suffered more during these three years than the workers did during the early years of capitalist slavery They have endured cold hunger and suffering—all this in order to retain power ³ At the very beginning of the revolution Lenin predicted that heroism energy and self sacrifice of the masses in order to defend the revolutionary gains and overcome all difficulties standing in the way of Soviet power, would

¹ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 26 pp 191 192

² *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 27 p 210

³ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 31 p 401

be inexhaustible To use Lenin's expression of earlier period it could be said that us and them became essentially different, us being both the revolutionary people and its newly born power

Victory Lenin wrote soon after the Revolution will be on the side of the exploited for on their side is life numerical strength the strength of the mass the strength of the inexhaustible sources of all that is selfless dedicated and honest all that is surging forward and awakening to the building of the new all the vast reserves of energy and talent latent in the so-called common people the workers and peasants Victory will be theirs ¹ True the forces of the counter revolution became more active Yet 'no matter how great may be the anger and indignation in some circles deep among the people a constructive process is taking place an accumulation of energy and discipline which will give us the strength to survive all blows ²

It was the efforts to defend the revolutionary cause that gave powerful impetus to the development of new moral qualities to the process of moulding a new type of man Miracles of courage and fortitude of armed workers and peasants at the fronts of the Civil War and heroism of the working people in the rear were followed by a revolution in the depths of consciousness In 1919 in his immortal work *A Great Beginning* Lenin wrote It is the beginning of a revolution that is more difficult more tangible more radical and more decisive than the overthrow of the bourgeoisie for it is a victory over our own conservatism indiscipline, petty bourgeois egoism a

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 26 p 403

² Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 27 p 167

victory over the habits left as a heritage to the worker and peasant by accursed capitalism ¹ Only after the bourgeoisie has been overthrown the toilers and exploited as a body can display for the first time in history all the initiative and energy of tens of millions of people who have been crushed by capitalism ²

To retain power some vitally urgent tasks had to be solved including overcoming the devastation and famine organising production and gaining a military victory In *A Great Beginning* Lenin noted a kind of vicious circle in order to do away with starvation productivity of labour had to be raised We know Lenin continued that in practice such contradictions are solved by breaking the vicious circle by bringing about a radical change in the temper of the people by the heroic initiative of the individual groups which often plays a decisive role against the background of such a radical change ³ Such heroic initiative was displayed by those who took part in the communist subbotniks (unpaid voluntary work done by city workers over and above the usual working day and devoted to some public need—*Ed*) by workers in spite of the fact that they are weary tormented and exhausted by malnutrition ⁴

That movement enhanced the prestige of the workers in the countryside and the respect of non party workers for the Communists ⁵ Long before *A Great Beginning* appeared Lenin had

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 29 p 411

² Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 31 p 188

³ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 29 p 426

⁴ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 29 p 427

⁵ Lenin, *Coll Works*, Vol. 30 p. 202.

spoken of the necessity to bring about a change in the psychology of labour. Here is what he wrote about the psychology inherited from the past of a representative of the exploited mass. Naturally for a certain time all his attention all his thoughts all his spiritual strength were concentrated on taking a breath on unbending his back on straightening his shoulders on taking the blessings of life that were there for the taking and that had always been denied him by the now overthrown exploiters. Of course a certain amount of time is required to enable the ordinary working man not only to see for himself not only to become convinced but also to feel that he cannot simply take snatch grab things that this leads to increased disruption to ruin. The corresponding change in the conditions of life (and consequently in the psychology) of the ordinary working men is only just beginning.¹

In other words a psychological change in the masses had to come about both because of the heroism evoked by the desire not to allow the old autocratic capitalist system ever to return and because of the feeling that it was impossible to do away with economic disasters other than through a new attitude to labour. Labour discipline enthusiasm for work readiness for self sacrifice close alliance between the peasants and the workers—this is what will save the working people from the oppression of the landowners and capitalists for ever.² In the above cited *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government* a work replete with observations concerning psychology

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 27 p 270

² Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 29 p 251

Lenin wrote In a small peasant country which overthrew tsarism only a year ago there has naturally remained not a little of spontaneous anarchy intensified by the brutality and savagery that accompany every protracted and reactionary war and there has arisen a good deal of despair and aimless bitterness Obviously Lenin continued prolonged and persistent effort had to be exerted by the advanced workers and peasants in order to bring about a complete change in the mood of the people and to bring them on to the proper path of steady and disciplined labour ¹ Further in the same work Lenin wrote We must learn to combine the public meeting democracy of the working people—turbulent surging overflowing its banks like a spring flood—with *iron* discipline while at work with *unquestioning obedience* to the will of a single person the Soviet leader while at work ²

Lenin warned of the tenacity of the small proprietor outlook which boiled down to I'll grab all I can for myself the rest can go hang Yet, it was that mass that Lenin called to rouse to history making activity ³ to change its morals sullied by private ownership

He stressed that the masses must not only realise but also feel that the shortening of the period of hunger cold and poverty depends entirely upon how quickly they fulfil our economic plans ⁴ Lenin expounded his view on the need to combine enthusiasm (political and stemming from

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 27 p 244

² *Ibid* p 271

³ *Ibid* pp 267 268

⁴ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 31 p 511

it labour enthusiasm) with the prudence of a businessman and labour discipline based on personal interest First Lenin continued we counted on organising production on the crest of the wave of enthusiasm but then we realised that personal interest too was an impetus to raise production ¹ True the enthusiasm and heroism will for ever remain a glorious monument for that enthusiasm played a tremendous role and will be felt in the international working class movement for many years to come

To bring scores of millions of people to communism one must build the economy not directly relying on enthusiasm but aided by the enthusiasm engendered by the great revolution and on the basis of personal interest personal incentive and business principles ²

The matter however was far from being confined to the motives underlying the productivity and the intensity of labour Deep going changes in man and in people were taking place We have now reached the supreme moment of our revolution we have roused the proletarian masses and the masses of poor peasants in the rural areas to give us their conscious support No revolution has ever done this before ³ The entirely new us born in the course of the popular revolution rang with tremendous force in people's consciousness and manifested itself in a multitude of forms The two-year history of the Revolution Lenin wrote in 1919 showed that it was not only a model as far as the fulfilment of one's duty was

¹ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 33 p 58

² *Ibid*

³ *Lenin, Coll Works* Vol. 32 p 58

concerned but has also shown examples of the greatest heroism and of revolutionary enthusiasm and devotion such as the world has never before seen ¹

Back in 1917 Lenin saw far ahead. Only now is the opportunity created for the truly mass display of enterprise, competition and bold initiative. ² New tasks gave rise to a new type of man.

What we need is tens of thousands of picked, politically advanced workers, loyal to the cause of socialism, incapable of succumbing to bribery and the temptations of pilfering and capable of creating an iron force against the kulaks, profiteers, racketeers, bribe-takers and disorganisers. ³ Very early Lenin foresaw the future evergrowing role of different forms of competition within a new system of social and in particular labour relations. He considered competition both a form of initiative and a means for developing new labour discipline.

Lenin especially noted what from the point of view of social psychology was an important aspect of competition—it provided vast opportunities for influencing the people by force of example. In other words, positive examples are always attractive while negative ones are repulsive. In *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government* Lenin wrote that socialism for the first time puts competition on a broad basis and explained that accounting and publicity would transform dead bureaucratic accounts into living examples, some repulsive, others attractive. ⁴ Under capitalism

¹ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 30 p 68

² *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 26 p 407

³ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 27 p 390

⁴ *Lenin, Coll Works* Vol 27 p 259, 260

the significance of an example in public life is restricted. But after political power has passed to the proletariat the situation radically changes. "Force of example for the first time is able to influence the people."¹ This is one of the most important means for developing new psychology in general.

"Naturally, among the people who have only just thrown off an unprecedentedly savage yoke there is deep and widespread seething and ferment; the working out of new principles of labour discipline by the people is a very protracted process, and this process could not even start until complete victory had been achieved over the landowners and the bourgeoisie."² On the contrary, under socialism, according to Lenin's letter to G. M. Krzhizhanovsky (1920), to solve even such a problem as electrification "*both competition and initiative among the masses*"³ should be encouraged.

Profound indeed are Lenin's observations on psychology relating to the Civil War and military intervention periods. He reacted very keenly to the changes in the masses' mood towards war. In February 1918 Lenin wrote: "...yes, at present the masses are not in a state to wage war." But he predicted with certainty that the time of unheard of hardship would pass, and the people would "recover its strength and find itself capable of resistance."⁴ Lenin was not waiting for a change to come about; he was preparing that change.

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 27, p. 261.

² *Ibid.*, p. 258.

³ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 35, p. 467.

⁴ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 27, p. 46.

He explained the reasons for the invitation of the peasants of Pskov just back from the front to attend the 7th Congress of Soviets as follows

we shall bring them to the Congress of Soviets to relate how the Germans treat people so that they can change the mood of the soldier in panic stricken flight and he will begin to recover from his panic and say This is certainly not the war the Bolsheviks promised to put an end to this is a new war the Germans are waging against Soviet power Then recovery will come ¹

Later he wrote These months have passed and the turn has come Gone is the time when we were impotent a new discipline has been created and new people are joining the army and laying down their lives by the thousand ²

During the years of the Civil War Lenin invariably paid attention to the psychology of the masses both at the front and in the rear On the one hand he noted even such details as the influence of the autumn cold on morale You know that the autumn cold affects the Red Army men depresses them creates new difficulties ³

On the other hand Lenin also took account of the psychological factor in overcoming all kinds of military difficulties The situation is extremely grave But we do not despair for we know that every time a difficult situation for the Soviet

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 27 pp 112 113 Lenin's expression panic stricken flight is not accidental It relates to a special field of military psychology Compare to what Lenin wrote in 1912 The Turks retreat became a disorderly flight of stupefied starving exhausted and maddened mobs (*Coll Works* Vol 18 p 372)

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 28 p 125

³ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 31 p 312

Republic arises the workers display miracles of valour and by their example encourage and inspire the troops and lead them on to fresh victories¹

Lenin displayed cautious but keen interest in the psychological processes taking place amidst the peasant mass. He noted the big difference between the social and psychological conditions of workers and peasants. Workers all over the world Lenin stressed were more or less united. An attempt to change the psychology of a scattered peasantry was an important part of the struggle for socialism. But hardly anywhere in the world have systematic supreme and self sacrificing attempts been made to unite those who are engaged in small scale agricultural production and because they live in remote out of the way places and in ignorance have been stunted by their conditions of life.² Much time was needed to solve that task of socialist construction. It was far from being solved by 1921 when peculiarities of peasant psychology manifested themselves with tremendous force exerting pressure on the Soviet state to change its economic policy.

This was the first, Lenin wrote in 1922 and I hope the last time in the history of Soviet Russia that feeling ran against us among large masses of peasants not consciously but instinctively. The reason for it was that in our economic offensive we had run too far ahead that the masses sensed what we ourselves were not then able to formulate consciously.³

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 30 p 66

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 27 p 436

³ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 33 p 421

Thus in the years after the Revolution essentially new overtones appeared in Lenin's observations concerning social psychology. Whereas before he had been interested in the revolutionary forces of society which could be united and merged for the overthrow of the old system, everything had been aimed at making the masses to draw a clear cut distinction between us the working people, and them the exploiters backed by the state and the church; then the efforts were directed at fostering quite a different us

Among other things Lenin paid great attention to the development of a new psychology, a new attitude to state power. The state, he wrote, which for centuries has been an organ for oppression and robbery of the people, has left us a legacy of the people's supreme hatred and suspicion of everything that is connected with the state.¹ Under Soviet power that legacy made itself felt with respect to accounting and control. The them attitude to the state leaders and the state bodies as opposed to the us attitude had to be gradually eradicated. The fact that the broad masses treated not only the achievements but the blunders of the Soviet government and the Party as their own was, according to Lenin, a phenomenon of tremendous progressive significance. They have tackled this formidable task (laying the foundations of socialism—Ed) with their own hands and by their own efforts. And they have committed thousands of blunders from each of which they have themselves suffered. But every blunder trained and steeled them.²

¹ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 27 p 253

² *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 28 p. 140

In the years after the Revolution as well as before it, Lenin's interest in the processes and phenomena of social psychology was again extremely clear of purpose. All that was important to him not for itself but as an indication of the state of the revolutionary forces and as vital conditions for defending and developing the revolutionary cause. Before the Revolution there had been few stable ways and traditions of value to the science of revolution, and the latter had been in the main concerned with overcoming most of the ways and traditions of the then existing society. After the Revolution the urge for developing a man of an entirely different cast of mind, a different mould and different morals became more pronounced. An ardent fighter against everything stagnant in pre-revolutionary social life, Lenin became equally ardent in his efforts to make the new a habit, a part of life. He wrote that we could only regard as achieved what has become part and parcel of our culture, of our social life, our habits.¹

Thus for Marxist-Leninist social psychology, psychological turns and make-up can only be relatively different and the importance of one or the other depends on concrete historical conditions.

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 33 p 488

7 PSYCHOLOGY AND THE REVOLUTION

As we have seen Lenin took an interest in social psychology only as a revolutionary. For that reason he was almost exclusively interested in dynamic socio-psychological phenomena, a category often referred to as the frame of mind. Lenin was not interested in the opposite comparatively stable category described as the psychological make up or character of a given class, professional, ethnic or other community. Social psychology does not completely separate the two categories but it does distinguish between them.

The words frame of mind are used many times in Lenin's works. Aside from what has already been mentioned we shall add that Lenin referred to the frame of mind as early as 1895 when he visited Orekhovo Zuyevo. There is the sharpest division of people into workers and bourgeois, he wrote. Hence the workers' frame of mind is rather oppositional.¹

¹ *Lenin Coll Works* Vol 34 pp 20 21

It would be wrong to disregard other terms Lenin used with considerable frequency For instance the word instinct (revolutionary instinct class instinct) It is used in a sense close to spontaneity a term very prevalent in Lenin's works along with such terms as intuition sentiment energy passion enthusiasm indignation hatred weariness and apathy

The working class is instinctively spontaneously Social Democratic ¹ a period of accumulation of revolutionary energy ² public ferment and revolutionary pressure ³ the rising of hundreds of thousands of workers who have not forgotten the peaceful 9th of January and who long for an *armed* January 9 ⁴

The workers themselves are spontaneously carrying on just such a struggle Too passionately did they live through the great struggle in October and December ⁵ The monarchist illusions the peasantry harboured often paralysed its energy and gave rise to empty day dreams about God given land ⁶

Unless the masses are politically conscious wide-awake and full of determination no changes for the better can be brought about

Unless the masses are interested politically conscious wide awake active determined and independent absolutely nothing can be accomplished in either sphere ⁷

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 10 p 32

² Ibid p 151

³ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 5 p 43

⁴ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 9 p 285

⁵ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 15 p 53

⁶ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 17 p 125

⁷ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 18 pp 127 128

The drowsy philistine spirit which often in the past pervaded some of the Swiss workers associations is disappearing to give way to the fighting mood. The workers held their ground as one man ¹

What is common to all three (Lenin refers here to political crises—*Ed*) is a mass dissatisfaction overflowing all bounds a mass resentment with the bourgeoisie and *their* government ²

Owing to the resumption of the predatory war the bitterness of the people naturally grew even more rapidly and intensely ³

You cannot lead the people into a predatory war in accordance with secret treaties and expect them to be enthusiastic. And it is impossible to arouse popular heroism without breaking with imperialism ⁴

The people cannot and will not wait patiently and passively ⁵

The workers of Petrograd will bide their time gathering their forces and preparing for resistance ⁶

There are signs of growing apathy and indifference. That is understandable. It implies not the ebb of the revolution as the Cadets and their henchmen vociferate but the ebb of confidence in resolutions and elections. In a revolution the masses demand action, not words from the lead

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 18 pp 160 161

² Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 25 p 170

³ Ibid p 237

⁴ Ibid. p 363

⁵ Ibid. p 71

⁶ Ibid. p 83

ing parties they demand victories in the struggle not talk ¹

Discontent indignation and wrath are growing in the army among the peasantry and among the workers ²

Solution of the national and agrarian questions would result in a real outburst of revolutionary enthusiasm among the people ³

The above compilation of Lenin's phrases shows the versatility and scope of his socio-psychological thought. It is apparent that Lenin mainly focussed his attention on psychological changes in the masses and in classes on the dynamics of psychology. He devoted considerably less attention to stable features of the psychological make-up both of the main working classes and of various social strata groups and professions. Though his observations in this regard do not present as complete a picture as his comments concerning socio-psychological changes they often turn out to be of great importance since Lenin dealt with persisting psychological forms which the revolution was to overcome. Besides there may be rare occasions when revolution finds it necessary to rely on such forms. Finally as we have already seen Lenin was particularly intent on having the cause of the socialist revolution after its victory become the body and soul of the masses, i.e., a strong psychological habit.

So far we have mainly dwelt on Lenin's views regarding working class psychology. However

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol. 26 p 184

² Ibid. p 59

³ Ibid. p 98

he has also left historically valuable notes and observations concerning bourgeois psychology. Following Marx, Lenin pointed out vacillations of the petty bourgeoisie between ultra revolutionary and reactionary sentiments as well as differences in the psychology of the petty bourgeoisie and the big bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie are businessmen, people who make big commercial transactions and are accustomed to getting down even to political matters in a strictly business-like manner. They take the bull by the horns rather than putting their trust in words. ¹ What Lenin wrote about the bourgeoisie in 1905 could also apply to many other historical periods. The bourgeoisie's recognition of the revolution cannot be sincere irrespective of the personal integrity of one bourgeois ideologist or another. The bourgeoisie cannot but bring selfishness and inconsistency, the spirit of chaffering and petty reactionary dodges even into this higher stage of the movement. ² In exposing bourgeois liberalism, Lenin analysed its psychological causes. While making concessions to the nobility in politics, the bourgeoisie was inclined to indulge the former's sins and consider its own position in the light of a fine liberal spirit.

This liberal logic is psychologically inevitable: our nobility must be depicted as negligible in order that its privileges may seem only a negligible departure from democracy.

With the bourgeoisie occupying a position between the hammer and the anvil, idealistic phrases too, are psychologically inevitable phrases.

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 25 p 196

² Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 9 p 126

ses which our liberals in general and their pet philosophers in particular are now mounting with such bad taste ¹

According to Lenin the bourgeois struggle for freedom was marked by inconsistency and half measures and this gave rise to two tendencies among the pre revolutionary Russian intelligentsia which for the most part was of bourgeois origin On the one hand the revolutionary intelligentsia which comes mainly from these classes has fought heroically for freedom ² On the other hand it displayed a time serving attitude and catered to the needs of the autocracy and the bourgeoisie

There you have Lenin wrote the psychology of the Russian intellectual in words he is a bold radical in deeds he is a contemptible little government official ³ Still Lenin pointed out on more than one occasion the natural and inevitable conflicts arising between the bourgeois intelligentsia and the bourgeoisie For instance

The refusal of the intellectuals to be treated as ordinary hired men as sellers of labour power has led from time to time to conflicts between the bigwigs of the Zemstvo Boards and the doctors who would resign in a body or to conflicts with the technicians etc ⁴

One could cite many observations Lenin made concerning such social strata as the salaried employees (state officials), the military and the clergy

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 8 p 429

² Ibid p 511

³ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 11 p 461

⁴ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol. 5 p 285

Lenin's observations concerning the military are interesting in that he brought out the contrast in the spirit of the old Russian army of the tsar and of the new Soviet army and indicated that even back in pre revolutionary times there was the irrevocable process of socio political differentiation among the military. The more the government employed troops against the population the more the troops became involved in political life. The counter revolutionary army Lenin said inevitably bred firstly the nuclei of revolutionary fighters and secondly masses of neutrally minded. In other words when the government sent soldiers against the revolution it stirred to action the most backward people the most ignorant the most cowed and the politically inert¹ and the struggle enlightened roused and enlivened these people.

In a few words Lenin aptly expressed the change that had taken place in the attitude of the masses toward the men in uniform. Those words were later popularized in literature and theatre.

We know that another voice is now rising from among the people they say to themselves now we need not be afraid of the man with the gun².

Lenin also gave a very apt description of officialdom in pre revolutionary Russia and its political wavering in 1917.

We shall quote only one of the many observations made by Lenin concerning the clergy. Lenin drew particular attention to the person of the village priest. He wrote in 1908. Why has the

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 9 p 352

² Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 26 p 463

village priest—that policeman of official orthodoxy proved to be *more* on the side of the peasant than the bourgeois liberal? Because the village priest has to live side by side with the peasant to depend on him in a thousand different ways and sometimes—as when the priests practice small-scale peasant agriculture on church land—even to be in a peasant's skin himself. So it turns out that the most reactionary priest finds it more difficult than the enlightened lawyer and professor to betray the peasant to the landlord.¹

Lenin had a lot to say, and his sayings are well known on the situation of women in pre-revolutionary Russia on women's role in the revolutionary proletarian movement and in socialist construction. Some of the thoughts Lenin expressed are of particular value to a psychologist.

Proletarian women. Lenin wrote in 1916 will not look on passively as poorly armed or unarmed workers are shot down by the well armed forces of the bourgeoisie.²

Concerning emancipation of women from domestic drudgery Lenin wrote in 1921 that that kind of transition was a difficult one because it involved the remoulding of the most deep-rooted inveterate hide-bound and rigid order.³

It is not our aim to list all of Lenin's descriptions of social groups, strata and classes. It appears essential however to show that all his scientific and revolutionary work was based on an important principle of knowing and using to

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol. 15, p. 27.

² Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol. 23, p. 82.

³ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol. 32, p. 162.

advantage the specific psychological features of each stratum each profession and—most important—of each class Note the following remark by Lenin Of course there are and always will be individual exceptions from group and class types But social types remain ¹

We should like to dwell particularly on that aspect of social psychology which pertains to the national question

Commenting on the words of Lazzari the Italian Socialist who once said We know the Italian peoples mentality Lenin remarked ironically For my part I would not dare to make such an assertion about the Russian people ² Indeed Lenin the great Russian revolutionary leader would not claim knowing the Russian peoples psychology And that is saying a lot

In the first place this implies that every national culture comprises two antagonistic cultures and there can be no such thing as a single psychology of such an ethnic community as a nation Furthermore Lenins words imply that playing up some features that are common to the entire nation serves to foster bourgeois patriotism and nationalism thereby stifling revolutionary awakening of the masses And perhaps the most important inference is that excessive stressing of national peculiarities serves to disunite the world revolutionary movement rather than unite it This Lenin writes in a sense is the same as subordinating the all Russian cause to the narrowness which makes the St. Petersburgers forget about Moscow the Muscovite

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 27 p 276

² Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 32 p 463

about St Petersburg the Kiev man about every thing except Kiev ¹

Lenin's views on national sentiments are best seen in his article entitled On the National Pride of the Great Russians

He wrote The interests of the Great Russians national pride (understood not in the slavish sense) coincide with the *socialist* interests of the Great Russian (and all other) proletarians ²

We are full of a sense of national pride and for that very reason we *particularly* hate *our* slavish past and our slavish present Nobody is to be blamed for being born a slave but a slave who not only eschews a striving for freedom but justifies and eulogises his slavery (e.g. calls the throttling of Poland and the Ukraine etc a defence of the fatherland of the Great Russians)—such a slave is a lickspittle and a boor who arouses a legitimate feeling of indignation contempt and loathing ³

Lenin regarded the process of assimilation of nations under capitalism as remarkable historical progress Lenin was for national liberation movement as long as they were against domination of one nation by another It should be noted that he never separated the question of national movements from that of the classes taking part in these movements He wrote The typical features of the first period are the awakening of national movements and the drawing of the peasants the most numerous and the most sluggish section of the population into these movements

¹ Lenin Coll Works Vol 34 pp 76 77

² Lenin Coll Works Vol 21 p 106

³ Ibid p 104

in connection with the struggle for political liberty in general and for the rights of the nation in particular ¹

Lenin vigorously opposed national discrimination regarding it as a way to poison the minds of the ignorant and downtrodden masses ²

As far as national liberation movements are concerned Lenin was interested in psychological aspects pertaining for instance to the feeling of hurt national pride of offence on the part of oppressed nations toward the great power oppressors and to oppressed nations distrust of their oppressors

Nothing or almost nothing is said however in Lenin's works about 'ethnic psychology' — specific features of the national character or the psychological make up of a given nation or people. Rarely do we find mention of the Russian people's capability for self sacrifice or the German people's inclination for theoretical thinking. On the whole such generalizations are alien to Lenin's way of thinking. This is because he believed that in any really serious and profound political issue sides are taken according to classes not nations ³

To sum it up Lenin was mostly interested in changing aspects of social psychology. He did not consider social psychology to be the source and solid foundation of social phenomena. He knew that social psychology could change and had to change. This left no place for idealisation or for making an absolute law out of it.

¹ Lenin *Coll Works* Vol 20 p 401

² *Ibid* p 237

³ *Ibid* p 36

tanently instincts or passions of the masses Tsarist minions strove hard to fan base passions among the ignorant masses ¹ Lenin was interested only in those aspects of mass psychology which facilitated revolution and were influenced by it.

As an instance of Lenin's understanding of socio-psychological dynamics we should like to quote from his *Before the Storm* (1906) More and more workers peasants and soldiers who only yesterday were indifferent, or even sided with the Black Hundreds are now passing over to the side of the revolution One by one the illusions and prejudices which made the Russian people confiding patient simple-minded obedient, all enduring and all forgiving are being destroyed ²

The workers party ' Lenin wrote that same year places all its hopes on the masses on the masses who are not frightened not passively submissive and who do not humbly bear the yoke but who are politically conscious, demanding and militant. ³

Lenin's instructions were to use mass psychology to radically overhaul old social relations and systems But he also maintained that everything pertaining to psychology which puts a brake on the tempestuous course of history should be overhauled Take the peasants for instance as a class they have a special kind of psychology—the peasant. is a practical man and a realist. ⁴ It requires special ability to win and

¹ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol. 10 p 78

² Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol. 11 p 135

³ Ibid p 416

⁴ Lenin, *Coll Works* Vol 29 p 211

change over the psychology of the mass peasants *And not to dare to give orders!* ¹— Lenin warned with reference to the peasants

Lenin's understanding of relations between the party and the masses is based on a wealth of socio psychological observations. Lenin instructed to live in the *midst* of people to know their *senti ments* to understand the masses to know how to approach them to win their *absolute* confidence

This explains why Soviet social psychology considers its specific laws and phenomena proceeding from observations which Lenin made in the course of an entire epoch for guidance in revolutionary practice

¹ Lenin Coll Works Vol 29 p 211

Б ПОРШНФВ

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Цена 21 коп

